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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001017

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF UN
PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY CENTER

REF: ASHGABAT 497

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On August 11, Fedor Klimtchouk, the Deputy Head of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), briefed poloff on the Center's priorities, recent activities and plans for upcoming action. The Center has four priorities: fighting transborder crime, including human trafficking, drug trafficking and terrorism; mediating a mechanism for regional water and energy resource management; coordinating a Central Asian regional approach to Afghanistan; and conducting workshops on preventive diplomacy for young diplomats in the region. As a UN institution respected by the Central Asian governments, it sees a role for itself as an impartial mediator and platform to resolve regional disputes. However, in addition to being a mechanism for Central Asians to discuss issues, its long-term success might best be judged in terms of whether its efforts result in innovative solutions and actual agreements. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In the area of management of regional water resources, a July 16 Ashgabat meeting of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, hosted by the UNRCCA, brought together water ministers of the five Central Asian countries, as well as donors and international organizations, to follow-up on the April event in Almaty (reftel). A new conceptual approach, "shared benefits, mutual gains," was introduced to the participants as an attempt to overcome the zero sum perspective that has characterized these countries approach to water management. The UNRCCA plans to hold an event in Dushanbe at the end of October to elaborate this concept and focus on how cooperation could produce shared benefits. In particular, the Center will urge the Central Asian countries to establish a regular framework of consultations on water and energy issues, with the Center serving as a platform for the mechanism. Its aim is to create the conditions under which these countries can develop a long-term approach, as opposed to the current ad hoc response to pending crises. The Bishkek agreement last fall, reached on the margins of a CIS summit, illustrated the ad hoc approach. During their meeting, the five Central Asia leaders hammered out an agreement in 40 minutes that addressed energy and water issues. Klimtchouk noted, however, that while the agreement

was partially implemented, transmission of Turkmen electricity to Tajikistan across Uzbekistan only became possible after the Tajiks and Uzbeks resolved an unrelated border dispute.

13. (C) In the fight against terrorism, Central Asia was designated as a test case for the UN General Assembly-created taskforce to counter the roots of terrorism. The UNRCCA was designated to implement the initiative, with European Union funding. There will be three expert level meetings, the first to take place in Bishkek in September or October this year, with the others to occur February/March and May/June of 2010 in other regional capitals. The UNRCCA's approach is to rotate events among the five regional capitals. The culmination of the effort will be a ministerial conference in October 2010 to adopt an action plan to fight terrorism in Central Asia. The Center also plans to organize a ministerial-level conference on drug trafficking at the end of 2010.

14. (C) Concerning Afghanistan, the Central Asian governments have said they can assist Afghanistan in areas in addition to humanitarian assistance, particularly in construction of infrastructure. The UNRCCA plans to organize a conference next year to address the support that Central Asian countries can provide to Afghanistan. Acknowledging UNAMA's role of coordinating all international aid to Afghanistan, Klimtchouk said the UNRCCA will act through UNAMA in organizing the event. As a riparian country for the Amu Darya River, Afghanistan should also be involved in discussions regarding regional water management. Afghanistan sent representatives

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to the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in Almaty and will be invited to the October meeting in Dushanbe. Klimtchouk noted, however, that the Afghans almost entirely lack the technical capacity for water management. To highlight the existing ties between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, he stated that Afghanistan gets electricity and 70 percent of its fuel from Central Asia.

15. (C) The Center will also organize workshops on preventive diplomacy for young diplomats in the five Central Asian countries, aimed at explaining the concept. It is currently working on its action plan for 2010 in advance of an October meeting of deputy ministers in Tashkent. Priorities have been identified with the Central Asians and, after feedback from the deputy ministers, the Center will implement over the course of the following year. There are some differences among the five countries' views about the role of the Center.

Noting the division between upstream and downstream countries, Klimtchouk said the Kyrgyz and Tajiks see themselves as vulnerable and want the Center to play the role of their "protector." However, Klimtchouk pointed out that the Center cannot take sides and maintain its role as a mediator. Kazakhstan considers itself to be "in a different league" from the others, but its representatives are actively involved and ready to act as a potential donor. The Uzbeks believe that no problem in Central Asia can be solved without them, a view that Klimtchouk saw as having some validity given their central location, large population, formidable military, and the role that Tashkent played during the Soviet era as a regional hub, educating many of the officials in the neighboring republics. Among all the five countries, the attitude toward the UN is positive. It is viewed as a natural mediator.

16. (C) COMMENT: Making good use of its UN cachet with the Central Asians, and pursuing active agendas on a number of fronts, the UNRCCA is succeeding as mechanism for getting the Central Asians to sit down and discuss thorny issues. That in itself is progress, especially if the Central Asians can regularize their consultations on water and energy issues, rather than the current ad hoc approach to looming crises. Still, while getting them talking is a necessary step, it will not be sufficient. The UNRCCA will also need to serve

as a platform for presenting hitherto lacking regional solutions and as a mechanism that pushes the parties toward agreement. Otherwise the Center's events might generate more talk, but few meaningful results. END COMMENT.

MILES